

90 JUN 1983

WD

PRESS RELEASE

OEXA 83-1435

THE VICE PRESIDENT  
OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY

FOR RELEASE: 12:00 noon, EDT  
Friday, June 17, 1983

CONTACT: Shirley Green  
Meredith Armstrong  
202/456-6772

REMARKS BY VICE PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH  
BEFORE THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
FRIDAY, JUNE 17, 1983

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. It's a pleasure to be back before the National Press Club not only to speak to you on a subject of serious national concern but to also convey a message to those Americans who are listening to this program over National Public Radio and Cable News Network.

In 1983 millions of Americans will spend approximately \$100 billion on illicit drugs. The overwhelming majority of that total will be spent on cocaine, marijuana and heroin. This is a staggering total that is diverted from the nation's legitimate economy and put into the hands of drug dealers and traffickers. When users look at cocaine and heroin and marijuana, they see a drug that is white or green or even brown. Well, they're wrong. The color of those drugs is red -- blood red. Because that's what the drug business is in the United States, the most deadly and dangerous criminal activity known.

Drug trafficking and all of its attendant activities not only threaten the social fabric of a large portion of our people and the stability of various regions in our nation, but also foster a multitude of other illegal activities including murder, public corruption and corrupt banking practices. Drug profits are so great that the personal risks to the men and women who enforce our nation's narcotics laws have grown dramatically and dangerously over the past five years. The profits of drug criminals are so staggering that the most sophisticated planes, boats and electronic intelligence equipment are employed to avoid apprehension.

The criminal cast involved in this deadly business has a substantial financial advantage over numerous law enforcement agencies especially local law enforcement agencies. And this advantage is used for one reason -- to avoid arrest and prosecution. To counteract this national curse, the Reagan Administration is determined to use every available resource. We are determined to employ not only all of the law enforcement agencies, but the United States military and our nation's intelligence community. To date, we have made significant progress. But let's be realistic, there is

- more -

much, much more to be done in the war against drugs.

Last year President Reagan announced a federal strategy for the prevention of drug use and drug trafficking. He divided the problem into five areas: first, international cooperation, second, drug law enforcement, third, education and prevention, fourth, user treatment and finally research. While we are making considerable progress in each of these areas, today I would like to direct my remarks to the law enforcement aspect of our national strategy, and announce the kickoff of an important new effort.

In February of 1982, I announced in Miami, Florida the establishment of the South Florida Task Force. The President asked me to lead this multi-agency effort against the criminal element that had virtually taken over and terrorized the Miami metropolitan area. Miami, once a vacation paradise for millions of Americans, became the playground for cocaine cowboys and thousands of other criminals involved in drug trafficking. The situation was critical and demanded a major federal law enforcement response. In a very brief period of time we sent to South Florida additional federal judges, more prosecuting attorneys and hundreds of additional law enforcement personnel. We beefed up the U.S. Coast Guard, solicited and received help from the Defense Department including the Navy, the Army, the Air Force and the Marines. We intensified our diplomatic initiatives which resulted in improved cooperation with the Bahamian government and some of our Latin American friends. The results have been gratifying but we are by no means satisfied.

The record shows that in South Florida, we have made progress not only in terms of combating crime and thwarting the efforts of drug smugglers, but also in terms of improving the morale of the people of the area. We have brought them hope for the future especially as it relates to the quality of life in Miami and the surrounding areas.

In February 1981, a public opinion survey taken by Miami business leaders asked this question: "Are you seriously considering moving out of the area because of the crime and drug problems?" Thirty-nine percent of the respondents said they were. The same poll was taken in February of this year and only nine percent said they were considering leaving. This is a tremendous improvement in people's attitude toward their community's future. Much of this change, this mood of optimism, can be attributed to the work of the dedicated men and women assigned to the Task Force.

While the war on narcotics continues in South Florida, there is impressive evidence that we are making solid progress. Drug arrests are up 27 percent. Marijuana seizures are up 23 percent. Cocaine seizures are up 54 percent. In the past fifteen months we have seized nearly three million pounds of marijuana and more than

- more -

17 thousand pounds of cocaine in and around the South Florida area. The street value of those drugs is about \$5 billion.

No one can, or will deny that too many drugs are still coming into the United States. But we have demonstrated an ability to make life difficult for the drug smuggler and the drug dealer. In addition to seizure efforts, we have launched financial investigations that not only confiscate money, but take away assets -- the planes and ships, cars and safe houses -- the basic infrastructure for drug organizations to operate effectively. Many of these investigations have been highly successful. We plan to do more. We will increase the heat and bring up the pressure.

I noted with interest this week that the Government Accounting Office issued its final report on federal drug interdiction efforts. I was pleased that the report gives our efforts in South Florida good marks. Many of the drug problems addressed in the GAO report are the very same problems that we have attempted to solve through our South Florida Task Force. They include the need for improved coordination and cooperation among all law enforcement agencies -- federal, state and local, the necessity for improved intelligence and the obvious need for more assets. The report accurately points out that our efforts in South Florida have caused disruption in the smuggling patterns and smuggling routes of traffickers, especially those operating out of the Caribbean, Central and Latin America. As a result we have witnessed an increase in drug smuggling up and down the Atlantic Coast, in the Gulf of Mexico, across the Mexican border and into California. While we have watched the changing tactics and innovations of the drug smugglers, we have laid careful plans to counteract these bold new criminal measures.

On March 23 of this year, the President announced the establishment of the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System, a bi-partisan, permanent program to protect our borders. The NNBIS will be operating in every region of the nation. It will utilize the general principles and the most successful interdiction techniques of the South Florida Task Force in order to buttress our national drug deterrence effort.

Today I am announcing the establishment of five new regional centers in addition to the one already operating in Miami. Each office will have a regional coordinator and deputy coordinator from Customs or Coast Guard. In the northeast the regional center will be responsible for interdicting drugs from the American/Canadian border at Erie, Pennsylvania, up to and around Maine and down to the Maryland/Delaware border. The regional center will be located in New York City.

In the southeast we are expanding the responsibility of the

- more -

South Florida Task Force. It will extend up the east coast to the Maryland/Delaware border and up the west coast of Florida to about Apalachicola. Miami will remain the center for this region.

The Gulf region will run from Apalachicola to Brownsville, Texas and New Orleans will be the regional center.

The southwest border region will extend from Brownsville, Texas to the Colorado River and the regional center will be El Paso.

On the west coast, the region will include the coast of California, Oregon and Washington, in addition to Alaska, Hawaii and the waters of the Pacific. The regional center will be located in Long Beach, California.

Finally, the north border region will run from the state of Washington to Erie, Pennsylvania and the center will be located in Chicago.

There are unique enforcement problems in each of those areas. The most serious drug trade in the northeast is the smuggling of heroin, especially in the port city of New York. The smuggling tactics used there are completely different from those utilized in South Florida. Heroin is smuggled in very small amounts, concealed in ship containers, aircargo, or carried personally by individuals. Counteracting heroin smuggling requires manpower-intensive operations by undercover agents and substantial assistance from the highly skilled local police of New York City. The key to heroin detection, however, is improved intelligence. Improved intelligence is necessary in all major port cities where the detection of illegal drugs is extremely difficult. The other major drug threat in the northeast comes from what are known as "motherships" -- ships laden with tons of marijuana that weave their way north, up the east coast of the U.S. from Colombia. In this area the interdiction efforts that we have found so successful in South Florida will be fully utilized.

We will use Navy patrol planes out of Brunswick, Maine and Navy ships out of Newport, Rhode Island. They will be coordinated with Coast Guard cutters and Coast Guard and Custom aircraft and Navy radar planes.

In the southeast region, which includes South Florida, we will continue to attack the problem with the combined forces of the Army, Navy, Air Force and the Marines in cooperation with U.S. Customs, the Coast Guard and additional assistance from DEA aircraft.

In the Gulf region, marijuana ships penetrate the Yucatan by staying close to the Coasts of Mexico and Cuba. Aircraft also

- more -

penetrate the Gulf Coast on flights from Colombia and Central America. To determine the extent of smuggling efforts in the Gulf region our operations are designed to determine the flow of traffic on the sea and in the air. Our tactics for interdiction and the force required to stop it may be similar to those forces used in South Florida.

On the southwest border, we have recently detected an increase in the smuggling of brown heroin and a vastly improved grade of marijuana along with overflights of this border by cocaine smugglers. Our efforts will first focus on detecting smugglers who literally walk or drive over isolated areas of the border, in addition to detecting U.S. aircraft flying South to load up with dope for return flight to the United States. We will also move surveillance assets to cover the low altitude routes to interdict the larger aircraft flying drugs from Colombia. Our interdiction battle in this region will be supported by airborne radar, Marine Corps interceptors and helicopters manned by law enforcement officials who will make the actual arrests.

The west coast represents our most difficult and challenging tactical problem. Ships carrying Thai sticks, a very high grade of marijuana, work their way across the Pacific on great circle routes and approach the west coast from the North. Marijuana grown in Hawaii or other drugs transshipped through that island state find their way to the mainland from the west. An increased flow of cocaine and marijuana from the west coast of Colombia approaches the United States from the south and much of the cocaine that gets into Florida is driven across country in trucks and cars approaching the west coast from the east. So you can see that we have a threat from 360 degrees that includes all types of drugs, in every conceivable kind of conveyance. To address this problem we can rely on many of the tactics we used in South Florida, that is radar aircraft, patrol planes, surface vessels and certainly improved intelligence.

On our northern border the trade is mainly heroin. It's first smuggled into Canada and then moved into the United States. We will be working closely with Canadian authorities to improve our detection capabilities along this extensive land mass.

Operations have already begun in each region. It's happening now.

The National Narcotics Border Interdiction System will work in unison with the Attorney General's twelve Organized Crime Task Forces that the President established in January of this year. The primary goal of the Attorney General's efforts is to bring to justice the men and women at the highest levels of drug and other criminal organizations. Last week the GAO report criticized our efforts because of the lack of success in this area. Let me just

- more -

say that criminal conspiracy cases take time to develop, and the Godfathers of major drug organizations are highly insulated. The investigation, apprehension and prosecution of these individuals take time and tedious effort. But the Attorney General's resolve in this area will not be broken and I can assure you that the interdiction efforts that I have announced today will be completely coordinated with the Attorney General's Task Forces. Our efforts will be mutually supportive and by closer coordination and cooperation, we will begin to close the existing gaps in our fight against drug trafficking.

I want to make one final announcement. In each of our regional headquarters, we have established as of today an operations information center. These centers will have highly skilled professionals assigned from all of our agencies including the FBI, the DEA, Customs and Coast Guard, the Army, Navy, Air Force and the Marines, the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the intelligence community of the United States. We will gather and analyze intelligence. We will assess the local threat. We will assign priorities to interdiction targets, identify our resources, recommend the most effective action to be taken and provide all coordination for joint special operations.

With the assistance of Defense Secretary Weinberger, we will bring more military support to our cause. With the help and support of CIA Director, Bill Casey, and the entire intelligence community, we expect to be better informed and more knowledgeable regarding the actions and activities of smugglers in order to position our resources in the right place at the right time.

We in the Administration are not unaware of the difficulty of our task. But our efforts are both innovative and substantial. The use of United States military resources provides us with an imposing presence in the air and especially on the high seas. The cooperation and coordination of the intelligence community is another arrow in our quiver. But despite all of these things, we must recognize that the thousands of men and women employed in this massive effort need the assistance and support of an aware and alarmed citizenry. The economic cost and the social destruction is too grave for this nation to conduct business as usual in the war against drugs.

The President and members of his Administration fully recognize the threat. Despite the resources that we have brought to this cause, we need leadership, understanding and guidance from parents and community leaders and from public officials throughout the country. No one agency, no one department, state or region can successfully win the battle alone. We must all work together to make a real impact against this insidious threat to our country. While we ask for your patience and your understanding, more

..Thank you very much.